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SUBJECT: NATIONAL ASSEMBLY DISCUSSES ANTI-TERRORISM
POLICIES AND PASSES NEW ARMS LAW

Classified By: DCM Matt Tueller for reasons 1.4 (b) and (d)

11. (C) Summary: During separate February 2 discussions with the Ambassador, Members of Parliament (MPs) Dr. Yousef Al-Zalzalah and Abdullah Al-Roumi discussed the National Assembly's February 1 passage of a new law which expands law enforcement powers to search and seize illegal weapons, calling it a positive development that demonstrated solidarity between the GOK and Parliament in confronting extremism. They also shared their views on terror financing and educational curricula reform. One felt that current terror financing laws and enforcement need strengthening, the other thought current laws are adequate but said he would personally bring to the floor amendments needed to close any loopholes. MP Al-Zalzalah noted that Prime Minister Shaykh Sabah, in a departure from past statements, has vowed to hunt down terrorists and stated that the terror problems in Kuwait are not over. Both MPs agreed that more must be done to combat terror, but disagreed on some of the particulars. End Summary.

Special Session Unanimously Passes Arms Law

12. (U) In the wake of recent crackdowns and shoot-outs with militants, Kuwait's National Assembly passed on February 1, during a closed-door special session, a law which permits law enforcement to search and seize illegal firearms in an effort to confront terrorism. The bill was unanimously approved by all 45 MPs present. (Note: Three of the four MPs who did not attend the special session were Islamist MPs Abdullah Akkash, Awad Barad, and Jassem Al-Kandari. End Note.) The law will be in effect for two years and is renewable thereafter; it was originally enacted in 1992 and was enforced until 1994 to reduce the number of weapons from the numerous arms caches found after the Iraqi invasion. The measure empowers public prosecutors to issue search warrants to conduct searches on people and residences in the search for illegal weapons.

13. (C) In separate discussions with the Ambassador on February 2, MPs Dr. Yousef Al-Zalzalah and Abdullah Al-Roumi discussed the new arms law and other anti-terror policies and initiatives. Both MPs praised the new law saying that it was necessary to revisit the old policy. MP Al-Roumi said that he opposed the measure in 1992, but believed that it was necessary this time to show support to the GOK. MP Al-Roumi told the Ambassador that the vote was a declaration of support to the GOK in its efforts to combat terrorism. He said Kuwaitis were happy that there was unanimous agreement between the GOK and the National Assembly on this issue and that National Assembly is ready to support any GOK measures it deems necessary to fight the spread of this ideology, to include limiting sources of funding.

14. (C) He mentioned that the roles of mosques and educational reform were discussed during the session and that KD 5.5 million (approx. USD 18.5 million) was already earmarked for programs to combat terrorism. He said the intention of one policy is to publicly discuss the takfiri ideology and to show that it is in opposition to Islamic Sharia. MP Al-Zalzalah also said that during the closed session there was discussion about reviewing Kuwait's Islamic groupings and their ideologies. He told the Ambassador that some MPs are blaming the GOK saying that its openness with the Islamists set the stage for the current security situation. The National Assembly also addressed the issue of opposing sectarianism in Kuwait.

Shaykh Sabah Firm Against Terror... For Now

15. (C) Prime Minister Shaykh Sabah Al-Ahmed publicly stated that the terror problem in Kuwait was not over and that Kuwait will continue to hunt down the terrorists. Noting that the Prime Minister's position on terror is "crystal clear," MP Al-Zalzalah said that the PM did not permit anyone to offer a justification for terrorism during the closed-door session. Al-Zalzalah pointed out that the PM's position is a big change from past statements. While he was convinced that Shaykh Sabah's stance against terrorism was firm, he was not certain whether the Prime Minister would stand by his convictions over the long-term. He pointed out that last year the PM publicly stated the Kuwait University Faculty of

Sharia was espousing intolerant and sectarian ideas and needed to be combined with the Faculty of Law in order to control it. Despite personal statements promising to reform the Faculty of Sharia, Al-Zalzalah said, Shaykh Sabah decided not to make any changes and claimed the decision came not from him, but from the Council of Ministers.

16. (C) MP Al-Zalzalah also said that although he personally likes Interior Minister Shaykh Nawaf Al-Ahmed, his personality does not lend itself to standing firm against terror. He explained that Shaykh Nawaf must make stronger statements against the extremists. He said that the Interior Minister refers to them as "outlaws" when he should be calling them "killers and criminals."

Curricula Needs Reform

17. (C) Al-Zalzalah told the Ambassador that he confronted the Education Minister on the need for curricula reform. The MP stated that the curricula is flawed and is often misinterpreted by religious education teachers who define religious principles in terms of violence and intolerance. (Note: Al-Zalzalah pointed out that Sulayman Bu Ghaith, spokesman for Al-Qaida was a religious education teacher in Kuwait. End Note.) He claimed that the Council of Ministers was well aware of this problem and that he was given a promise from an Undersecretary in the Ministry of Education that the offending parts of the curricula would be removed. Al-Zalzalah said that the Undersecretary made no changes to the curricula and because of this Al-Zalzalah asked Shaykh Sabah to fire Education Minister Dr. Rasheed Hamad Al-Hamad if he refused to recognize these problems. (Note: MP Al-Zalzalah is a Shi'a MP and often speaks against the educational, societal, and legal disparities encountered by Kuwaiti Shi'a. End Note.)

18. (C) MP Al-Roumi disagreed with Al-Zalzalah saying the educational curricula in Kuwait is not the problem. He said the problem is the foreign extremist exploitation of young people and speculated that some of the foreigners captured during January's shoot-outs in Kuwait may have influenced the Kuwaiti members of the militant group to commit acts of violence. (Note: A number of Saudis and one Jordanian citizen have been detained in connection with the January shoot-outs. End Note)

Terror Finance Controls Unaddressed

19. (C) The Ambassador raised with both MPs the existence of unauthorized charity collection boxes, shortfalls in Kuwait's money laundering law, and the need to lift the information-sharing restrictions of the Central Bank's Financial Intelligence Unit. MP Al-Zalzalah claimed that unauthorized charity collection problems still exist. He said that money collection boxes could still be found all over Kuwait and that he saw one recently at a local hospital. The Ambassador stated these unauthorized money flows should be cut off and terror financing should be criminalized. Al-Zalzalah agreed that efforts to fund terrorist organizations should be criminalized and that Kuwait's Financial Intelligence Unit should be more flexible in sharing financial transaction information with other countries.

10. (C) MP Al-Roumi said he hasn't seen any unauthorized collection boxes, not even during this past Ramadan, and is unaware of current violations. He claimed the real problem was that security agencies in Kuwait were "penetrated," and that this needs to be controlled. While MP Al-Roumi agreed that money laundering was a key source for terror funding, he told the Ambassador that there is already an article in Kuwait's money laundering law that penalizes those who fund terrorists. He said that current articles in the penal code are sufficient and that the GOK expressed a willingness to review all the laws and to strengthen them where necessary. MP Al-Roumi said that he would personally bring to the floor of Parliament any loopholes in the laws that need to be addressed. He further stated that the GCC Anti-Terrorism security agreement signed by GCC ministers in May 2004 would pass in the National Assembly. He explained there was pressure from the GOK to pass the measure which would facilitate anti-terror related law enforcement cooperation within the GCC.

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